

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000911

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS; PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/02/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: SMOOTH TRANSITION OF POWER IN KACHIN STATE

REF: A. RANGOON 252

[B](#). RANGOON 82

Classified By: Poloff Dean Tidwell for Reasons 1.4 (b, d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Following the death of Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) Chairman Tu Jai, the Central Committee moved quickly to ensure a smooth leadership transition. Three rival Kachin factions participated in the funeral. Kachin sources expect the new leader, former Vice Chairman Lanyaw Cawng Hra, to continue the KIO's cease-fire with the Burmese military regime and its participation in the National Convention. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Rev. Dr. Saboi Jum, Kachin director of Shalom Foundation (ref A) and long-time peace mediator between the Kachin and the GOB, discussed recent leadership changes in the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) cease-fire group. This followed the June 15 death of KIO chairman, Tu Jai, from liver cancer. After serving in the Burmese Army for eight years, Tu Jai helped organize the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) in 1961. He became Chief of Staff of the KIA in 1976 and was one of three Kachin signatories to the cease-fire agreement with the Burmese regime in 1994. He became Chairman and President of the KIO in 2001 and held both positions until his death.

[1](#)3. (SBU) When Tu Jai's health began to deteriorate seriously in a hospital in Yunnan Province, China, the KIO Central Committee nominated Vice Chairman Lanyaw Cawng Hra as acting chairman. A standing committee of twenty-one members met on June 19, a day after Tu Jai's funeral, and formally selected Lanyaw Cawng Hra as President of the Kachin Independence Council, the administrative arm of the KIO, and Chairman of the KIO. Lanyaw Cawng Hra is a graduate of Rangoon University. He worked as a township official in Myitkyina and Bhamo in Kachin State and later served as Secretary-General of the KIO.

SIPDIS

LEAVE YOUR GUNS OUTSIDE

[1](#)4. (C) In a rare show of unity, KIO's rivals, the New Democratic Army - Kachin (NDA-K) and an NDA-K splinter group attended the June 18 funeral ceremonies at Laiza, the KIO headquarters on the border with China. Saboi Jum said that SPDC member Lt. General Ye Myint told the Kachin that the Burmese regime will recognize only the KIO and the NDA-K, but not the NDA-K splinter group, which surrendered to the GOB in [1](#)2005. The regime, however, permitted the splinter group to settle in Myitkyina, Kachin State's capital.

MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE NATIONAL CONVENTION

[1](#)5. (C) Saboi Jum said the change in KIO leadership will not affect the KIO's cease-fire agreement with the regime, and the KIO will send its quota of five delegates to the National Convention (NC). He did not know if the new chairman would continue to be a delegate. Saboi Jum claims that the government did not handpick the KIO's delegates and that they have the mandate of the Kachin people. He said they meet with Kachin community groups before they go to the NC and brief the groups after each session. Admitting that the Kachin are "not fully satisfied" with the NC process, they feel they have no other choice. He said most Kachin think participation in the NC is better than the alternative of returning to the jungle to take up arms.

[1](#)6. (C) Saboi Jum claimed without specifics that the GOB has acceded to some Kachin demands in the NC. Kachin elders told SPDC Secretary-1 Thein Sein that not all Kachin support the cease-fire agreement, particularly the younger generation (ref A), therefore the GOB needs to give a little to preserve Kachin unity. The key Kachin demands are authority to: collect taxes, maintain a home guard force, preserve their culture and literature, operate a state legislature, and select their own civilian governor. He said the ethnic minorities do not want military officers to be CEOs of their states and regions. He claimed the Kachin have successfully insisted that their demands be recorded in the NC minutes.

17. (C) COMMENT: The change in KIO leadership is not likely to shift the policies of this Kachin cease-fire group or its relationship with the Burmese regime and other Kachin groups. Ongoing rivalry among the Kachin factions over timber and jade concessions may quickly corrode the recent display of camaraderie. We do not share Saboi Jum's optimism that the SPDC will grant Kachin "demands" for greater local autonomy, since this would set precedents for other minorities and reverse recent trends noted in Kachin State (ref B) and elsewhere to increase central control. More equitable power sharing arrangements will require a major turnaround by the SPDC and a new willingness to engage in an open political dialogue. END COMMENT.  
VILLAROSA